

**Meals on Wheels & CANASP**  
**Testimony to the Appropriations Committee**  
**March 1<sup>st</sup>, 2023**

**H.B. 6659: AN ACT CONCERNING THE STATE BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM  
ENDING JUNE 30, 2025, AND MAKING APPROPRIATIONS THEREFOR**

Good afternoon Senator Osten, Representative Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee, my name is Stan Mingione, Executive Director of The Estuary Council of Seniors Inc. located in Old Saybrook and Vice President of the Connecticut Association of Nutrition and Aging Service Providers (CANASP), which is comprised of the nine regional providers of Elderly Nutrition Programs (ENPs) throughout the state. The Estuary Council of Seniors Inc. is an Elderly Nutrition Provider for lower Middlesex County and we service 9 shoreline communities providing Meals on Wheels (MOW) to over 400 seniors.

I am writing today to voice some concerns about the Elderly Nutrition Programs (ENPs) in the State of Connecticut and how the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic will forever change how we operate and deliver our vital services to the state's most vulnerable population. Each meal provider in the state has had to become creative, flexible, and innovative during these uncertain last few years. Despite a myriad of increasing fiscal challenges, many of us have been coming up with alternative ways of making sure that no senior suffers from food insecurity.

Time and again, ENPs are told how important the work they are doing is. Unfortunately, though we may believe deeply in the work we do, and the importance to our senior population, the reality is that those services have an associated cost, and that cost continues to increase. Without an additional increase in budgetary support for the Elderly Nutrition line item under DADS, we risk providers being unable to continue that important work. Senior nutrition programs provide a wellness check, combat social isolation, provide nutritionally balanced meals that help avert malnutrition, allow seniors to stay in their homes and prevent expensive hospital and nursing home stays. The benefits are clear and quantifiable. Please help our programs continue to do the important work that we have always done and will continue to do. Each meal provider is now challenged with continuing to provide meals to an increasing population of seniors who would otherwise have nowhere to turn.

As we like to say, our service is more than "just a meal". We provide socialization and daily wellness checks on individuals and our meals help folks to remain independent and in their homes, reducing the need of institutionalization. I believe it is imperative that Meals on Wheels are not left out of the conversation regarding an adequate level of funding to offset inflation, the impending ARPA fiscal cliff, and the overall lasting impact of COVID-19.

Thank you for your support of our vital meal programs and the senior citizens who rely on it.

Respectfully,

Stan Mingione

Executive Director

The Estuary Council of Seniors Inc.